

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CA, US, SENV

SUBJECT: RICHELIEU-CHAMPLAIN MEETING

1. FEDERAL, STATE AND PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS MET IN WASHINGTON ON DECEMBER 16 TO DISCUSS CANADIAN APPLICATION TO INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION FOR FLOOD CONTROL WORKS ON RICHELIEU RIVER. CANADIANS STATED THAT APPLICATION HAD BEEN APPROVED BY CABINET AND WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO IJC IN "NEXT FEW DAYS." CANADIANS NOTED THAT GOC AND QUEBEC REMAIN VERY CONCERNED ABOUT FLOOD DAMAGES IN RICHELIEU BASIN AND FEEL THAT "SOME MODEST" MEASURE OF FLOOD CONTROL MUST BE IMPLEMENTED IN NEAR FUTURE.

2. CANADIAN PROPOSAL (PLAN XAA) BASED ON CONTRACTOR UNCLASSIFIED

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DEVELOPED MODEL IS FOR A FIXED WEIR AND DREDGING IN

RICHELIEU RIVER. PLAN APPEARS TO OFFER SEVERAL ADVANTAGES OVER PREVIOUS CANADIAN AND IJC PROPOSALS, ALTHOUGH LACKING DETAILED ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW. US DELEGATION POINTED OUT LATTERDEFICIENCY AND STATED USG NOT YET PREPARED TO COMMENT ON CANADIAN PROPOSALS, BUT WOULD PROVIDE OUR VIEWS ON PLAN, POTENTIAL COST SHARING, AND APPLICATION IN LATE JANUARY. US DELEGATION ALSO AGREED TO INFORM GOC EARLIEST IF FURTHER MODEL STUDIES OF PROJECT DESIRABLE. GOC INDICATED IT WOULD

PROVIDE FULLER ENVIRONMENTAL RATIONALE WITH ITS IJC APPLICATION AND WAS PREPARED TO BEAR COSTS OF LATTER.

3. WHILE PREMATURE TO FORECAST FINAL US POSITION, CANADIAN PROPOSAL APPEARS TO BE POSITIVE STEP FORWARD. NEW YORK AND VERMONT REPRESENTATIVES VIEW PROPOSAL WITH SOME INTEREST, A NOTICEABLE CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS OPEN OPPOSITION. FIXED NATURE OF CONTROL STRUCTURE APPEARS TO HAVE ELIMINATED CONCERN THAT REGULATION PLAN COULD BE ALTERED AT SOME FUTURE DATE. LIKEWISE, HEIGHT OF WEIR HAS BEEN INCREASED BY POINT 85 FEET, THUS REDUCING EXTENT OF YEAR'ROUND EFFECT ON LAKE LEVELS, ONE OF PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS TO EARLIER PLAN XA. HOWEVER, CANADIAN DESIRE FOR EARLY IMPLEMENTATION (MID-1976) MAY CLASH WITH DESIRES TO IMPLEMENT REGULATION BASED ON RESULTS OF ON-GOING ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES OF IJC BOARD. FIXED NATURE OF WORKS WOULD MAKE ANY CHANGE IN REGULATION EXTREMELY DIFFICULT IF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES INDICATED UTILITY OR NECESSITY OF SUCH CHANGE. KISSINGER

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